

Message Text

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41

ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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P R 161325Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4567

INFO CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 733

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJECT: NEW POLITICAL-SOCIAL CHALLENGES TO THE GKR

REF: A. PHNOM PENH 526

B. PHNOM PENH 719

C. PHNOM PENH 726

1. THE GKR APPEARS TO BE REACTING PRUDENTLY AND RELATIVELY PHLEGMATICALLY TO THE NEW WAVE OF POLITICAL-SOCIAL TURBULENCE NOW FACING IT.

2. THE SOCIO-REPUBLICAN PARTY (IN A MANIFESTO ISSUED 15 JAN) IS CALLING FOR SANCTIONS AGAINST SON SANN, AND SOME OF LON NOL'S ADVISERS ARE URGING HIM TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL MEMBER CHENG HENG WHOM SON SANN PROPOSED AS INTERIM REPLACEMENT FOR LON NOL. HOWEVER, LON NOL, AFTER QUERYING ME THIS MORNING 16 JAN AS TO WHETHER I THOUGHT CHENG HENG HAD BEEN AN ACCOMPLICE OF SON SANN, SAID HE PLANS NO ACTION AGAINST CHENG HENG AND AFTER AN EXHAUSTIVE EXAMINATION OF THE SON SANN EPISODE, THE CABINET DECIDED TODAY MERELY TO RECONFIRM ITS 6-POINT POSITION ON PEACE. LONG BORET TELLS ME THAT THERE IS "NO QUESTION" OF SANCTIONS, WHICH COULD "ONLY BENEFIT SON SANN".
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3. BORET SAYS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL ALSO TAKE A LOW KEY APPROACH TO RENEWAL OF TEACHERS STRIKES. THE CABINET BELIEVES THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE TEACHERS UNDERSTAND THAT THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT GIVE THEM MORE THAN THE 3000 RIEL RAISE ALREADY PROPOSED. HOWEVER,

IT RECOGNIZES THAT A MINORITY WITH KHMER COMMUNIST BACKING IS CAMPAIGNING HARD TO SPREAD THE STRIKE. BORET SAYS THE CABINET WILL TRY TO USE MORAL PERSUASION AND PATIENCE TO GET THE TEACHERS BACK TO WORK.

4. THE MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO THE GOVERNMENT IS TODAY'S CRYPTO-COMMUNIST DECLARATION BY FACULTY OF LETTERS LEADER, LOCH SOEUN, WHO IS CERTAINLY A KC SYMPATHIZER IF NOT OPERATIVE. BOTH BORET AND (TO JUDGE FROM PAST CONVERSATIONS) LONNOL ARE SENSITIVE TO THE DANGER OF SETTING UP A THAILAND TYPE SITUATION HERE; AS ONE LINE OF ATTACK THEY WILL CERTAINLY LOOK TO MOBILIZING OTHER STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS AGAINST THE LOCH SOEUN MANIFESTO; IN THIS REGARD THE CABINET HAD MOVED ALREADY TODAY TO MEET MANY OF THE FACULTY OF COMMERCE STUDENT ASSOCIATION'S DEMANDS. BUT IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE GOVERNMENT CAN LET IT GO AT THAT WITHOUT FINDING ITSELF BOMBARDED WITH MANIFESTOS AND STATEMENTS FROM A WHOLE RANGE OF DISSIDENT GROUPS. THE TRICK WILL BE TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIMING AND USE THE RIGHT MEANS IN MOVING AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS AND LEFTISTS IN THE STUDENT ASSOCIATION. WHEN THEY TRIED TO DO IN THE SPRING OF 1972 WITH THE GENDARMERIE NATIONALE, THE GKR MADE A HASH OF IT. THIS TIME THEY SHOULD PROBABLY LOOK TO THE MORE SKILLFUL NATIONAL POLICE, AND PLAN THEIR COUNTERATTACK WITH SOME CONSIDERABLE CARE.

4. COMMENT: ALL OF THIS POLITICAL NOISE ADDS TO THE OVERALL AIR OF CRISIS HERE CREATED BY THE MAJOR MILITARY EFFORT THE KC IS MAKING AGAINST PHNOM PENH. A NEW PRESSURE POINT, THIS TIME FROM THE RIGHT, WILL BE THE SOCIO-REPUBLICAN PARTY CONGRESS SCHEDULED FOR 20 JAN. VARIOUS EXTREMIST ELEMENTS WITHIN THE PARTY ARE PRESSING FOR A HARD LINE STANCE BY THE PARTY TO PUT THE GKR'S HOUSE IN ORDER. I DISCUSSED THIS THIS MORNING WITH LON NOL, WHO AGREED THAT A BLOWUP AT THE CONGRESS WOULD BE DAMAGING AND SAID THAT HE HAD ALREADY ADVISED THE PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE TO AVOID HARSH LANGUAGE AND AGGRESSIVE STANCES. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE PARTY ACTIVISTS WILL LISTEN TO THEIR PATRON.

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5. IN ALL THIS TURBULENCE, HOWEVER, IT APPEARS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT LOST ITS SANG FROID.
ENDERS

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 27 JUL 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, POLITICAL LEADERS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: kelleyw0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974PHNOM00733
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: P750001-2072
From: PHNOM PENH
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740174/abbrzbhf.tel
Line Count: 100
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: A. PHNOM PENH 526 B. PHNOM PENH 719 C. PHNOM PENH 726
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kelleyw0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 APR 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <30-Sep-2002 by kelleyw0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEW POLITICAL-SOCIAL CHALLENGES TO THE GKR
TAGS: PINT, CB
To: STATE INFO CINCPAC
COMUSSAG
BANGKOK
PARIS
SAIGON
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

